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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/25/2016

TAGS: PGOV PREL AJ AM

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH EU SPECIAL  
REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

REF: A) BAKU 1086 B) YEREVAN 920 C) YEREVAN 938

Classified By: Amb. John M. Evans for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) During a July 25 meeting with the Ambassador, EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus Peter Semneby seemed most concerned with determining what "flanking measures" he could take to assist the Minsk Group in getting Nagorno Karabakh (NK) negotiations back on track. The Ambassador told him that we encouraged public discussion on the topic to prepare the Armenian people for a potential settlement. Semneby told us that, during his July 24 meeting with President Kocharian, the president said he had not gone to Moscow for the July 21 CIS summit because he felt any efforts to protest the recent Russian decision to close its border with Georgia would be fruitless. Regarding NK, Semneby said he told Kocharian not to play for time. End Summary.

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SEMNEBY ASKS HOW TO HELP,  
WE SAY "ENCOURAGE PUBLIC DISCUSSION"  
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¶2. (C) Semneby's demeanor during the meeting tracked with Embassy Baku's observations that he was interested in creating a role for himself with regard to NK (ref A). He peppered the Ambassador with questions, including asking what sort of "flanking measures" he could provide for the Minsk Group. The Ambassador said we would welcome any effort on the part of other countries and diplomatic organizations to stress to the GOAM that the NK problem needs to be solved. He also identified the need to prepare the public for any possible peace agreement and commented that increased public discourse on the topic in Armenia was a very positive result of the Minsk Group's decision to release negotiation details last month.

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SEMNEBY SAYS KOCHARIAN WASN'T REALLY SICK  
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¶3. (C) Semneby said that, during his July 24 meeting with President Kocharian, the president said he had not gone to Russia for the CIS summit because he felt any attempt to engage Russia on the Russian closing of the Verkhniy Lars border (refs B, C) would not be fruitful. He said he did not want to return to Yerevan empty-handed. The president's office had issued a statement saying that Kocharian did not go to Moscow because he was suffering from a respiratory illness. Semneby said, however, that the president looked perfectly healthy and did not mention illness at all as a

reason for not attending the summit.

¶4. (C) Semneby said he told Kocharian not to play for time on NK, and that the GOAM's hope that the resolution of other frozen conflicts might set precedents for the region was an illusion. He said Kocharian did not respond.

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COMMENT  
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¶5. (C) Semneby appears to be eager to assist with resolution of the NK problem and, given his high profile in the region, may be a useful partner in helping to prepare the Armenian populace for any potential peace agreement. He may also be able to help provide assistance to support the implementation of an agreement and we will continue to coordinate with him on assistance and other issues.

EVANS